

TERUMA

LEVELS OF KEDUSHA

---

A

---

**Timing of the *Mitzva* to Build the Mishkan**

---

The *mitzva* of building the Mishkan dominates the second half of Sefer Shemos. The Mishkan was the place where Hashem's Shechina rested. Rashi and Ramban disagree about how to understand the timing of the events leading up to the commandment to build the Mishkan. Long before them, the Midrash and Zohar also took different perspectives.

According to the simple reading of the Torah, the *mitzva* to build the Mishkan was given right away at Har Sinai, the day that Moshe Rabbeinu concluded the *bris* to keep the Torah. This was most probably the same day that the Ten Commandments and Parshas Mishpatim were taught to Bnei Yisrael. Then the story of the *eigel* occurred, while Moshe was on top of Har Sinai. The aftermath of the *eigel* was followed by the people's punishment, Moshe's prayers on behalf of Bnei Yisrael, the resolution of that story, and then the renewal of the *mitzva* of building the Mishkan. This is the way the Ramban and Zohar understand the order of events.

Rashi, though, following the Midrash, invokes the rule of *ein mukdam u'me'uchar baTorah*, the Torah is not always in chronological order. Since we see the Torah spends so much time

discussing the Mishkan again after the *eigel*, apparently the *mitzva* to build the Mishkan was given only after the *eigel* and after Moshe broke the *luchos*, punished the sinners, went back to Har Sinai, and prayed to Hashem for forgiveness for the Jewish People. After that reconciliation, Hashem gave the *mitzva* to build the Mishkan.

---

## B

---

### Mishkan Dimensions

---

The Shem Mishmuel presents an interesting analysis of this *machlokes*. He raises a question. With a careful reading of the *parsha*, the dimensions of the Mishkan do not compute. One of the *keilim* of the Mishkan could not actually fit into the building. Chazal say that the *keruvim* that Shlomo made were each 10 *amos* wide, yet the whole *kodesh hakodashim* was 20 x 20, so perforce the *aron* itself took up no space. Additionally, the Gemara teaches (Sota 35a) that each time the Jews moved and carried the pieces of the Mishkan with them, the *aron* was not actually carried. Instead, it carried the *levi'im* who “carried” it. In addition, the beams of the Mishkan were too numerous to all fit on the limited number of wagons they used. They were more than 15 feet tall, and they must have weighed many tons. How could a few oxen on a few wagons carry all these beams? Clearly, we are dealing with something that did not work according to the regular laws of nature. The Mishkan was a miraculous construct even though it was based on physical dimensions.

How could Bnei Yisrael engender this kind of miraculous building to function with them in the desert? What merit did they have that enabled them to construct a physical building that broke through physical limitations? The Shem Mishmuel says that this was a result of the love of Bnei Yisrael for Hashem, as demonstrated by their boundless donations for the building of the Mishkan. They made all of their donations in a matter of days. They donated

millions of *shekalim* worth of money, precious metals and stones, materials, textiles, and animal products. They were motivated by their immense love for Hashem. So, Hashem responded with His love—as if with a winking eye—making some of the features of the Mishkan miraculously fit despite the physical boundaries of the edifice.

Just like Bnei Yisrael went beyond normal efforts to build the Mishkan, Hashem went beyond the normal laws of nature to enable the Mishkan to function.

---

## C

---

### The Source of Bnei Yisrael's Appreciation

---

Where did this immense love Bnei Yisrael had come from? According to the Ramban and Zohar, this love came from Sinai. The experience of hearing the Ten Commandments and of feeling Hashem so close to them brought out an intense desire to be close to Him. Bnei Yisrael demonstrated their desire for closeness to Hashem in their response to the call for donations. They donated boundlessly and thereby achieved special closeness to Hashem and the ability to create a miraculous building.

In contrast, Rashi and the Midrash say that Bnei Yisrael achieved this tremendous love through the episode of the sin of the golden calf. Once Moshe came down from Har Sinai, destroyed the calf, punished the evildoers, and told them of the dire consequences, the bulk of the Jewish People experienced great feelings of regret. They desired to make amends for the sin of betraying the Almighty and not following the laws of idolatry so soon after Sinai. They did *teshuva* at the deepest level of their souls.

Chazal say that the crowns Moshe told the people to remove after the sin of the *eigel* had been given to them after they accepted the Torah (see Shabbos 88a). One crown made them invincible in battle, while the other protected them from the angel of death.

After the sin, they voluntarily gave up their crowns, subjecting themselves to enemies and even to death. This level of repentance, accepting even death as punishment with the aim of reestablishing closeness to Hashem, created a tremendous yearning to do the will of God. Their *teshuva* aroused within them much more yearning for Hashem than they felt before the sin. The people gained greater desire, enthusiasm, and alacrity to reach out and grow closer to Hashem. Because of the *eigel* and their subsequent *teshuva*, they felt that only Hashem could redeem them. This motivated them to donate millions of *shekalim* in just a few days. This love is what produced the miraculous building of the Mishkan.

---

## D

---

### Two Mishkenos

---

The Shem Mishmuel says that, in fact, both ideas are correct. Hashem commanded Bnei Yisrael to build a Mishkan right after the Aseres Hadibros, as the simple reading indicates. This *mitzva* of building a Mishkan was commanded before the *eigel*, when Bnei Yisrael still had their crowns. In this state, the Mishkan was going to be an amazing spiritual edifice. All the gold and silver that would have been donated for the Mishkan would have been more spiritual than physical. It is hard to grasp this because we are living in a physical world, with sins. But for people who were like Adam and Chava before the sin, as Bnei Yisrael were after they received the Torah, the physical side was imbued with great spirituality. They were incredibly more spiritual relative to their physical aspect.

We see, for example, that Moshe was able to go forty days without food and water. He lived on his spirituality. There are stories of great *tzaddikim* who lived not long ago who barely ate. There were some who barely ate except on Shabbos, like the Belzer Rebbe and the Baba Sali, who were alive only forty years ago. They

were very spiritual people, and their physical side was a minor aspect of their personality. Eating wasn't that important to them.

According to the original *mitzva* to build the Mishkan, the Jewish People were going to build something so spiritual that the gold and silver would be physically reduced to nothing and would become spiritual in nature. The building itself would have been fit for Adam and Chava before the sin.

But the Jewish People sinned. And when they sinned, the whole character of the *mitzva* changed. They lost their crowns, their immortality and invincibility. The struggle between good and evil became real again. The Mishkan that had to be built after the reconciliation needed more physicality than the original plan called for. This second Mishkan was still very spiritual, but it was more physical than in the original plan. In certain ways, its spirituality superseded physical limitations and laws, but it was nevertheless a primarily physical entity.

---

## E

---

### Different Levels of *Kedusha*— Moshe's Challenge

---

The Shem Mishmuel explains that holiness has many levels. The idea of becoming holy is the central motif and imperative of our Torah, as the *pasuk* states, “*Ki am kadosh atah*” (Devarim 14:2) and “*kedoshim tihyu*” (Vayikra 19:2). This agenda has many levels. Clearly, a person like Moshe Rabbeinu was holy. His holiness surpassed the holiness that others can attain. He went to the top of Har Sinai, spent forty days without food or water, and communicated with Hashem. He went back a second time to pray for Bnei Yisrael, and a third time to receive the next set of *luchos*. For Moshe, what does the command of *kedoshim tihyu* mean?

The Shem Mishmuel says that *kedusha* means abstinence, to restrain oneself and thereby achieve closeness to Hashem. More

specifically, *kedusha* means to give up something for Hashem. What did Moshe Rabbeinu give up? Did he give up physical pleasures? This is a ridiculous concept to apply to such a great person. Moshe wasn't interested at all in physical pleasures.

Every one of us has a certain degree of *kedusha*. Some of us have achieved certain levels of *kedusha* at which certain things don't even tempt us. How many of us feel a temptation to eat bacon? When we pass by McDonald's, we are not tempted. Do we fulfill *kedoshim tihyu* by not eating pig?

We may have other temptations, though, that are difficult for us. If someone insults us, do we answer back in kind? Do we talk badly about someone behind his back? These are the challenges of *kedusha* that we face at our level. We have to resist the temptation of *sinas chinam*. For us, sometimes it is difficult to be tolerant of others. But not eating *treif* is usually not a high-level fulfillment of *kedoshim tihyu* at all. Some people, though, who grew up in a non-religious family may encounter a challenge when choosing to eat only kosher food. When becoming observant, it can be very hard to give up non-kosher food. This is their *kedusha*. Thus, *kedusha* is related to each person uniquely.

What was Moshe's *kedusha*? It wasn't money. After they crossed the Yam Suf, Bnei Yisrael stayed by the shore to gather all of the money and other valuables from the dead Egyptians. Moshe, however, didn't take anything. He was busy with the coffin of Yosef. He had no desire for money, just as we have no desire for non-kosher food.

Did Moshe want power? Moshe argued with Hashem for a week in an attempt to avoid becoming the leader of the Jews. So, what was Moshe's interest that he had to give up in order to become holy on his level, to achieve *kedoshim tihyu*?

Moshe indeed had a certain desire. He wanted to grow in his spirituality. He wanted to become closer to Hashem. No matter how close he was, he knew he could still come closer. He had a great desire to understand more of Hashem's nature and His ways

of running the world. Moshe asked Hashem, “*Hodi’eni na es dera-checha*. Let me know your ways” (Shemos 33:13). This was the arena in which his *kedusha*—his holy restraint—was to be expressed.

Rashi (Shemos 19:14) says that when Moshe came down from Har Sinai, he went straight to the people. He did not deal with his own spiritual concerns, but only with the people’s. Moshe turned away from his own spiritual dealings so that he could teach Bnei Yisrael the Torah, so that they would achieve *their* spiritual goals. Moshe decided to set his own personal spiritual advancement aside. He performed Hashem’s will to help the Jewish People. He gave up his own desire for personal spiritual development in order to help others.

---

## F

---

### **Holy Responsibilities to Others**

---

We have responsibilities to other Jews, especially to our children and our friends. We also have a responsibility to ourselves and to Hashem to develop our own spiritual sides. As holy as Moshe would have become had he studied more Torah, he decided to put away his own desires. He had a responsibility to bring Torah to Am Yisrael. This was his principal mission. Moshe thus said, “My responsibility is to bring Hashem’s word to Am Yisrael. This takes precedence over my own personal development.”

There are many instances in which we, too, should put aside our own personal interests in order to bring Torah to Am Yisrael. This especially applies to parents. Parents have many responsibilities, both to themselves and to their children. We should follow the model of Moshe. We should give precedence to the spiritual development of our family over our own personal development. This is certainly more important than climbing the ladder of success or becoming rich, popular, or famous. The private platform of our family, of our spouse and children, must be our primary

agenda—just as Moshe put aside his own warranted, personal holy needs to help Am Yisrael learn Torah. Each of us in our own way has to put aside our own personal development to help others who depend on us. This is the *kedusha* of Moshe.

My Rebbe, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveichik *zt”l*, once said something startling—that Moshe Rabbeinu even gave up the spiritual development of his own children for the sake of Bnei Yisrael. This prioritization was unique for Moshe in his special role. The average person, though, must put his children first. *Aniyei ircha kodmim l’aniyei ir acheres*, the needy of one’s own city take precedence over the needy of another city—but *aniyei beischa* come even before that. Moshe was a special messenger from Hashem. Only he had to give up even his own family for Bnei Yisrael. No one else should do such a thing. One’s own family precedes the needs of others. We must take care of our family, first and foremost.

Each person has his or her *kedusha*, the sacrifice that only he or she can make to achieve his or her mission in life. For some of us, it is giving up physical pleasures. For others, it is passing up on the pursuit of wealth and fame. And for some of us, it is a spiritual price that must be paid in order to achieve greater good.

The Shem Mishmuel explains that *kedusha* is a function of each person at his or her own level, related to his or her own background and goals. Everybody is unique and has his or her own challenges. Each person must deal with the challenge at his or her level. My challenge is not your challenge, and my sacrifice is not your sacrifice. We each achieve *kedusha* in our own individual way. The result is that each of us has our own unique relationship with Hashem.



## Uniquely Holy Times and Places

Just like *kedusha* has many different levels, the various times of the year have different kinds of *kedusha*. The days of the week, Rosh Chodesh, Yom Tov, Shabbos, and Yom Kippur—each of these *kedushos* is different. *Kedusha* is not an all-or-nothing concept. It is relative to different people, times, and places.

The Shem Mishmuel explains in a special *drasha* that there are three levels of *kedusha*. We see these three *kedushos* in the Mishkan: there was the *chatzeir*, the outer courtyard; the *kodesh*, the first sanctuary; and the *kodesh hakodashim*, the inner sanctum of the Mishkan. These are the three levels of *kedusha* in the realm of place.

All Jews are allowed into the *chatzeir*, unless they are *tamei*. In the *kodesh*, which in the Beis Hamikdash was the *ulam* and *heichal*, only *kohanim* are permitted. The only person who enters the *kodesh hakodashim* is the *kohen gadol*. Here we find three levels of *kedusha* in people: 1) ordinary Jews, 2) *kohanim*, and 3) the *kohen gadol*.

We also find three *kedushos* in the realm of time. The three types of holiness in time are 1) Rosh Chodesh, 2) Yom Tov, and 3) Shabbos. Rosh Chodesh has greater *kedusha* than weekdays because of the special *korbanos* that are brought. It is like the *chatzeir* and parallels the ordinary Jew. Even though Rosh Chodesh is holier than regular weekdays, work is permitted. On Yom Tov, however, we can do only some *melachos*, the ones that have to do with food preparation. This parallels the *kodesh* and the *kohen*. On Shabbos and Yom Kippur, even activities that have to do with preparing food are prohibited. These days parallel the *kodesh hakodashim* and the *kohen gadol*.

We thus have three levels of holiness in time that are similar to three types of holiness in place and people.

---

## Uniquely Holy People

---

We also find varying levels of *kedusha* practices for regular Jewish People. There is one type of *kedusha* that everyone has to keep: we must all stay away from prohibited things such as sexual prohibitions, prohibited foods, and prohibited creative activities on Shabbos. This is a *kedusha* that is expected and demanded of every Jew. In the realms of time and place, this is parallel to Rosh Chodesh and the *chatzeir*.

The second level of holiness is *kadeish atzmecha b'mutar lach*, voluntary restraints. A person can eat as much (kosher) cake as he wants, but he can decide that he will eat only a certain number of pieces a week. Or he could limit the time he spends browsing the web. These are activities that may normally be permitted. But the person who makes these commitments wants to achieve *kedusha* in things that are permitted. This is like Yom Tov, the days on which we can do certain *melachos* while others are forbidden. So too, we create *kedusha* in certain voluntary areas, but not always.

The third level of *kedusha* is related to the concept of *b'chol derachecha da'eihu*, restraint and holiness in all things. This is the level of the *tzaddik*, the righteous Jew, who with every fiber of his being feels that he is serving Hashem. This is the level of Shabbos and Yom Kippur, days on which we serve Hashem the entire time. This is the level of the *tzaddik*.

The various forms of the Mishkan also had different levels of *kedusha*. The *mitzva* of Mishkan that came right after the Ten Commandments was a very high-level, holy Mishkan. It was intended to be a building of almost pure spirit, like being in Gan Eden before the sin of the Eitz Hada'as. This high-level Mishkan came about due to the intense love and excitement to be the people of God. Then came the terrible sin of the *eigel*. The Mishkan was transformed into a more physical building. It was driven by feelings of repentance and a desire to come back to closeness with

the Creator. This second Mishkan was to have less *kedusha* than the first one.

---

## I

### Two Ways of Getting Close to Hashem

---

The Shem Mishmuel explains that we have two motivations to get closer to Hashem. Sometimes, we feel inspired. We experience feelings of love and enthusiasm, and we marvel at Hashem's immense blessings in this great world and are grateful for the kindness He showers upon us in our lives. When we come to the Kotel, for example, we feel the intense pull of His love pouring out to us from the holy mountain, and we respond with intense love and desire. This is the level of the first Mishkan.

But sometimes we sin, and our sins separate us from Him. We feel heartbroken afterwards, and we feel that we need Him. We seek Him from the farthest distances of the world and feel that we cannot exist without Him. We are lost and need Hashem to bring us back. These feelings also bring us back to Hashem. These are the feelings of the second Mishkan, the Mishkan that was commanded after the *eigel* and the subsequent *teshuva*.

---

## J

### Two Kinds of Shabbos

---

This dichotomy is reminiscent of two ideas of Shabbos. In the first set of the Ten Commandments, the Torah uses the word *zachor*—remember and cherish the Shabbos. The parallel word *shamor* in the second set of *luchos* is negative, meaning “don't desecrate the Shabbos.” *Zachor*—love the Shabbos—was given to us in the first commandments, written before the sin. It is the Shabbos of beauty

and enjoyment, reveling in the beauty of the day. It is the Shabbos of inspiration.

The second set of *luchos* came after the *eigel*, after sin and repentance. There, the Torah uses the word *shamor*. We need the Shabbos to save us from sin, alienation, and isolation. We experience this aspect of Shabbos at night. As we leave the six days of the week when we can feel so distant from God, we need Shabbos to bring us back. Shabbos is a form of repentance. Shabbos is similar to the word *teshuva* in that both words have the letters *shin*, *beis*, and *tav*. Shabbos can also be understood as *rashei teivos* for *Shabbos bo tashuv*. This is the Shabbos of *shamor*, of the *ba'al teshuva*. This is the Shabbos of the Jew who flees the *chol* (secularity) of the week.

Then comes Shabbos day. It is a day of closeness to Hashem. We are ready then to come closer and closer to our beloved God. Shabbos day elevates us higher and higher until we reach the pinnacle of *kedusha* at *shalosh se'udos* as we eat and sing the *zemiros* at the climax of Shabbos. This resembles the Mishkan before the sin, the state of Adam before he ate from the Eitz Hada'as. This resembles the pre-*eigel* commandment of *zachor*. This is like the inner sanctum of the Mishkan, the *kodesh hakodashim*.

---

## K

---

### Holy Vacillations

---

We all oscillate spiritually between closeness to Hashem and sinning. We then have to repent for our failures and sins. Our sins make us feel alienated and distant from our Creator. When we then seek Hashem with all of our being, we find Him. This is the Mishkan after the sin, which we should all have.

Sometimes, though, we are *zocheh* to find Hashem through *ahava*, through pure love and inspiration. When you stand on top of a mountain and see the view, you see God's handiwork. When

you look at the sky, take in the stars, the work of His hands; when you stand on the beach and see the endless ocean, let yourself be inspired. Standing atop a mountain overlooking the city of Jerusalem, let the holy city bring inspiration into your heart.

The inspiration of Israel and Jerusalem, of Shabbos Kodesh and Yom Kippur, leads us to Gan Eden, to the Mishkan before the sin. This leads us to the ultimate *kedusha*, the holiness of Moshe Rabbeinu, of Adam and of Chava before the sin, and of Bnei Yisrael right after they received the Torah.

May we be *zocheh* to both kinds of Mishkan and Shabbos, to both kinds of closeness to Hashem, to both *zachor* and *shamor*.

---

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

---

1. When was the *mitzva* of building the Mishkan given according to Rashi and Ramban?
2. What is the Shem Mishmuel's theory regarding these two opinions of Rashi and Ramban?
3. What are the three levels of *kedusha* in the Mishkan?
4. What are the three levels of *kedusha* in time?
5. What are the three levels of *kedusha* in people?
6. What are two different approaches as to how to relate to Hashem?
7. How are these approaches manifest on Shabbos?

---

## EXERCISE

---

1. Keep a record of spiritual events in your day. List inspirational situations and situations of alienation and repentance that prompted you to seek spirituality.



